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Montana

By

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The following address on Montana and her resources was delivered by Governor John E. Erickson, from the WMAQ broadcasting station in Chicago, upon the invitation of the Chicago Daily News. It is reprinted in pamphlet form by the Division of Publicity, State Department of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, upon the request of various Chambers of Commerce in Montana.

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HELENA, MONTANA

Let me in the first place express appreciation to the Chicago Daily News and to the management of WMAQ for the privilege of talking to you for a few minutes about Montana, otherwise known as the Treasure State, and sometimes spoken of as the State of a Thousand Peaks. I bring to you a message of good will, of hope and optimism from one of the greatest states of the new and growing west.

Montana is a state of imperial domain. It is the third largest state in the union. Within its borders could be placed all of New England, and there would still be room enough for New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. It has more square miles than Ohio, Indiana and Illinois combined. One of the continental railway lines crossing the state has 767 miles of main line between its eastern and western boundary lines, and its fastest express train puts in 24 hours within our borders on its journey to the coast.

State of Scenic Beauty.

Montana is a state of scenic beauty. Tourists returning from abroad often complain of insults tossed at Americans in Europe, and one wonders why they should suffer and endure this when they could much more easily see America first, and thus make it unnecessary to see Europe at all, for we have in our country, and especially in Montana, scenery that cannot be surpassed for grandeur and impressiveness and beauty. This is the verdict of many who have traveled to all the beauty spots of the world. Two of the gateways to the Yellowstone national park, the nation's wonderland, are in Montana; while Glacier national park, with its innumerable mountain peaks and eternal snows, its crystal lakes and matchless mountain streams, is wholly within our state.

Thousands of automobile tourists journey through our state each year seeking health, rest and recreation, and they find them. They complain at times of our highways, and, we must confess, perhaps with some reason. But bear in mind that the distances are so great in Montana that a perfect system of highways cannot be built overnight. However, we are making substantial headway with this problem. We are taxing ourselves three cents per gallon on gasoline sold in this state, and applying this to the construction and betterment of the roads. The money so raised is being matched by federal aid funds, so that we are now spending annually $5,000,000 in the construction and maintenance of highways.

Developing Highway System.

With these funds at our disposal we are going to develop a highway system as rapidly as is humanly possible, and when we have achieved our aim in this respect, life for the tourist in Montana should be one long sweet song from the time he encounters the watermelons and the cantaloupes of eastern Montana, until he indul-

ges in snowball fights on the crest of our snow-clad mountains of the west.

But I am particularly anxious to call your attention to Montana as being a land of opportunities, an attractive field for the investor and the homeseeker. The story of Montana's growth and development is most fascinating and full of human interest. It is the story of hardship and adventure of pioneers, of successes and failures, and heroic deeds of valiant men and women. The miners were the first to blaze the trail across the desert and through the mountain fastnesses, urged on by the glittering stories of the discovery of gold in the early 60's. Alder Gulch, Last Chance and Confederate gulches were soon made to deliver their treasure to enrich the world.

The Butte Hill.

Then came the development of the copper, lead and zinc mines. Butte hill is perhaps the most wonderful mining district in the world. This hill is about five miles square. On its surface is a modern city of 65,000 people. Under the surface of this little area is a veritable beehive, honeycombed with twenty-seven hundred miles of passages, where ten thousand men labor daily to extract the ores. The principal mineral is copper, while gold, silver, zinc and lead are extracted as by-products. This little area has already produced more than $2,000,000,000, and there is no sign of exhaustion. No other section of ground of equal size in all the world has produced wealth to compare with this. There is but one Butte hill, and we in Montana believe there will never be another equal to it.

In connection with the mining industry are the great smelters of Anaconda, Great Falls and Helena, where the yield of the mines is treated, prepared and turned out as the finished products. Of late years, however, as an agricultural state, Montana has been challenging the attention of the country. The rise of this industry has been phenomenal and dramatic. Any one who two decades ago should have predicted that Montana would be a great agricultural state would have been regarded as a joker.

The Triangle.

It is true that Montana has suffered with other states from economic conditions that followed the war. Deflation and a series of dry years took a dreadful toll, and Montana has had some unfavorable publicity along this line. In the Saturday Evening Post of April 12 1924, appeared an article by a well-known writer concerning an area in northern Montana, locally known as the "Triangle." For the purpose of locating this area, this triangle may be described as having its apex on the south near Great Falls. Its sides spread out until they form a base of about 130 miles along the Canadian border; the eastern point is at Havre and the western at Cut Bank. It contains almost 9,000 square miles, about 5,800,000 acres, an area larger than some eastern states.

In its virgin state the greater part was grazing ground for great herds of buffalo. Then, on the open ranges, came the days of the

cattle barons, followed in the period from 1907-1917 by the advent of the homesteader.

This country went through the same experience that other pioneer states went through. Concerning this area the writer in the Saturday Evening Post, above referred to, said:

"You may drive through the triangle now for 40 to 50 miles along the new bonded Roosevelt highway, and seem to see nothing but abandoned towns, abandoned farms, banks along the road with pieces of white paper pasted on their door panes and steam tractors sinking in the fields like lost locomotives."

Prosperous Section.

In reply to this, let me say that in this section this year the total population is estimated at 32,500. There are 4,120 farms with a farm population of 14,400. Ninety per cent of the farmers grow wheat and production this year will be about 10,000,000 bushels. Production of all farm crops is valued at almost $18,000,000, of livestock and other farm products $3,700,000, bringing the total to more than $21,000,000, or about $5,000 gross per farm.

The area contains one of the largest oil fields in the country. Total production of all industries will be about $25,000,000 and per capita production more than $800.

So that here in this district that was described as being only fit for savages and wild beasts you will find more than 9,000 homes, with all the comforts and conveniences of modern civilization—homes that are nurseries of industry, frugality and patriotism. This is typical of the entire state of Montana.

In Big Horn county, 200 miles south of the triangle, we have one farmer who will from 40,000 acres produce a million bushels of wheat. The entire state will average about 21 bushels per acre. And so, Montana, like all other pioneer states, has had its failures, its disappointments and even its tragedies, but in finding ourselves agriculturally, we have learned how to farm. People have become familiar with the climatic conditions and the nature of the soil. They have learned to conserve the moisture and to diversify their crops so that farming is no longer an experiment in Montana.

Increasing Diversity.

Increasing diversity of Montana agriculture is indicated by an analysis of census material. For example, 75 per cent of Montana farms milked cows in 1926, where but 43 per cent milked cows in 1920. Only 30 per cent of farms in 1920 had spring wheat, against 59.8 per cent in 1926.

Sixty-one per cent of farms in 1926 had beef cattle, compared with 48 in 1920. Only 2.5 per cent of farms in 1920 grew corn, where 10.6 per cent were growing it in 1926. Less than 1 per cent of farms raised beans in 1920, while nearly 3 per cent reported them for 1926. In 1920, 3.4 per cent of farms grew barley, while 11.6 reported it in 1926. Seventy-seven per cent of the farms in 1920 had chickens, while 81 per cent reported them in 1926. Forty-five per cent of farms reported swine in 1920, where 53 per cent reported swine in 1926.

Montana's come-back has been swift and decisive. Business failures are few and far between. There are practically no more bank failures. There are now $180,000,000 on deposit in the banks in this state—approximately $300 for each inhabitant. The people are paying their debts, banks are liquidating, real estate is beginning to move, and upon the map of prosperity Montana is "in the white."

Montana will this year produce, according to the estimate of the United States department of agriculture, 77,000,000 bushels of wheat —24,000,000 bushels more than the highest yield recorded in the state. Add to this the proceeds of the allied agricultural activities, such as dairying, sugar beets, poultry, etc., together with the proceeds from the sale of wool, sheep and cattle, and we will have a total of $220,000,000 worth of farm products, and this in addition to the proceeds from her other industries.

Rosy Future.

I do not want to weary you with statistics and details, but I want to say that the people of Montana see nothing but a rosy future for our state, and why shouldn't they? Providence was prodigal, indeed, in the distribution of her favors to Montana. She has a wonderful variety of natural resources which await development. This year's crop was grown on approximately 7,000,000 acres. It is conservatively estimated that there are 23,000,000 acres of virgin soil remaining, adaptable to diversified farming, waiting the industrious and intelligent home-maker. These lands can be had for low prices and on easy terms.

In western Montana are 60,000,000,000 feet of timber—a veritable forest primeval, where the woodman's axe has never been heard. Here, too, you may hear the music of innumerable cascades and waterfalls, which will provide almost unlimited possibilities for power, awaiting development to turn the wheels of commerce and industry and to contribute to the service and convenience of the household. Here, too, in the beautiful valleys of the Bitter Root and the Flathead, the home of the McIntosh apples, nearly all kinds of fruit are successfully grown.

The state has inexhaustible deposits of coal and iron, while in the great reservoirs of the earth oil is being found in abundance. Four great continental railroads cross the state, and side lines are being built to accommodate rural communities and to carry the products of industry to the markets of the world.

Our great university, with its five units at Missoula, Billings, Butte, Dillon and Bozeman, together with other denominational colleges, are training 4,000 young men and women for citizenship and service to their state. Church bells ring in every city and in many rural communities, and eager learners throng the public schools in every city and at every crossroad.

The people of Montana believe in their great state, in her mountains and her plains; in the richness and beauty of her lakes and her rivers; in her vast forests; the gorgeous beauty of her skies and the healthfulness of her climate. We believe in Montana people; in their

patriotism, their faith and their ideals. We believe in Montana's glorious future. What we need is men, high-hearted men of intelligence and industry in search of opportunity. We have no place for the ne'er-do-well, the land hog or the speculator. Montana needs the settler and the homebuilder and the investor.

We have passed through the pioneering period. We know what we can do. With our 30,000,000 acres capable of cultivation, with the development of our power and our immense coal and iron deposits; the development of these vast resources will mean increased payrolls, home markets and diversified industries. In short it will mean a great, a wealthy, and a prosperous state. And a characteristically western warm welcome awaits you whenever you want to come out to see us.